Plucking the American Chicken: Asymmetric Dependency, Strategic Costs, and the Rhetoric of the US-Israel Alliance

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In the widely circulated political fable often misattributed to Joseph Stalin, a dictator plucks a live chicken and then feeds it crumbs, demonstrating how trauma and dependency can compel a victim to loyally follow its abuser. This paper adopts this powerful allegory as a theoretical framework to analyze the modern geopolitical relationship between the United States and Israel. By mapping the United States as the metaphorical chicken, this analysis posits that American taxpayers and foreign policy interests have been systematically stripped of strategic autonomy, diplomatic standing, and financial resources. In return for these immense sacrifices, the American public is placated with the rhetorical crumb that Israel is our ally, a narrative carefully cultivated to mask an asymmetric dependency. Through an examination of historical aid allocations, diplomatic isolation at the United Nations, and the domestic influence of foreign policy lobbying, this paper explores how this geopolitical paradigm sustains itself. The resulting comprehensive analysis deconstructs the mechanisms of this relationship, challenging the traditional paradigms of mutual alliance by examining the profound strategic costs borne by the captive patron.

Keywords: US-Israel relations, asymmetric dependency, geopolitical strategy, foreign policy lobbying, diplomatic isolation, strategic costs, political allegory, international relations.

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1. Introduction and Methodological Framework

1.1 The Genesis of an Asymmetric Alliance

For over half a century, the geopolitical relationship between the United States and Israel has been characterized by American political leaders and foreign policy establishments as an unbreakable bond forged in shared democratic values and mutual strategic interests. Traditional international relations paradigms often categorize this relationship as a standard patron-client dynamic, wherein a global superpower provides security guarantees and financial assistance to a regional ally in exchange for strategic outposts, intelligence cooperation, and regional stability. However, a rigorous examination of the historical and contemporary realities of this alliance reveals anomalies that defy conventional political science models. Despite possessing unparalleled economic and military hegemony, the United States consistently absorbs immense diplomatic, financial, and strategic costs on behalf of its much smaller partner, often with minimal or counterproductive returns to its own national interests. This paper challenges the orthodox narrative of mutual benefit, proposing instead that the relationship has evolved into a state of asymmetric dependency, where the traditional patron has become captive to the interests of the client.

1.2 Theoretical Foundations: Realism, Constructivism, and Dependency

To deconstruct the mechanics of this unorthodox alliance, this analysis draws upon an interdisciplinary framework integrating structural realism, constructivist theories of state identity, and modified dependency theory. Structural realism dictates that states act rationally to maximize their own security and power, avoiding entanglements that drain resources without proportional strategic yields. Under a strict realist lens, the current configuration of the US-Israel relationship presents a paradox, as American commitments frequently undermine its broader strategic objectives in the Middle East and globally.

To explain this paradox, constructivist theory is employed to understand how narratives, historical memory, and shared identity are weaponized to override rational state interests. Constructivism highlights how the rhetorical designation of Israel as a vital ally has been institutionalized within American political culture, rendering policy deviations virtually impossible. Furthermore, this paper adapts concepts from dependency theory—originally formulated to describe the exploitation of developing nations by core capitalist states—to describe a phenomenon of reverse-dependency. In this inverted model, the core superpower is structurally and psychologically bound to the peripheral state through a complex web of domestic lobbying, media framing, and manufactured strategic narratives.

1.3 The Allegorical Method: Mapping the Fable to Geopolitics

At the center of this methodological framework is the application of political allegory to illustrate complex geopolitical mechanics. The apocryphal fable of a dictator plucking a live chicken serves as a potent theoretical model for understanding coercive dependency. In this allegorical mapping, the United States—specifically its taxpayer base, diplomatic standing, and strategic autonomy—occupies the role of the subject chicken. The systemic extraction of American wealth through unconditional military aid, coupled with the systemic erosion of American soft power through forced diplomatic isolation at international forums, represents the plucking of the feathers. This process inflicts undeniable harm, leaving the subject exposed, isolated, and diminished on the global stage.

The critical component of the fable, however, is not the abuse itself, but the mechanism of control that follows. The dictator does not maintain control through continuous violence, but by offering small, symbolic concessions—crumbs—that exploit the subject's trauma and manufactured desperation. In the geopolitical translation of this fable, the crumbs represent the rhetorical and political pacifiers fed to the American public and its political class. The ceaseless repetition of phrases such as "Israel is our greatest ally," the amplification of minor intelligence-sharing agreements, and the invocation of shared democratic values act as these worthless treats. They are designed to compel the American state to remain loyal to a paradigm that objectively harms it, creating a psychological and political dependency that prevents the United States from pursuing an independent, interest-based foreign policy.

1.4 Scope and Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this expanded analysis is to rigorously test this allegorical framework against the empirical record of US-Israel relations. By compartmentalizing the relationship into distinct spheres of analysis, the following sections will quantify the extent of the plucking and evaluate the true substance of the crumbs. The analysis will trace the financial and military costs extracted from the American public, measure the diplomatic damage sustained in international bodies, and assess the regional blowback generated by this unconditional support.

Simultaneously, the paper will scrutinize the mechanisms that sustain this dynamic, particularly the role of domestic lobbying apparatuses and media framing in domesticating the American political class. By systematically dismantling the rhetorical justifications used to maintain the status quo, this study aims to provide a comprehensive reassessment of the alliance. Ultimately, this paper seeks to map a conceptual pathway toward restoring American strategic autonomy, arguing that true national security requires breaking the cycle of asymmetric dependency and adopting a foreign policy rooted in empirical reality rather than manufactured allegiances.

2. The Fable of the Plucked Chicken: An Allegory for Geopolitical Dependency

2.1 The Anatomy of the Fable and the Mechanics of Control

To fully operationalize the fable of the plucked chicken as an analytical tool for international relations, it is necessary to first deconstruct its narrative components and psychological underpinnings. In the traditional telling of the myth, an authoritarian figure stands before an audience and violently strips a live chicken of its feathers. The act is brutal, sudden, and leaves the subject entirely exposed, traumatized, and stripped of its natural defenses. The critical turn of the allegory occurs immediately after the abuse. Instead of fleeing its tormentor, the freezing and desperate bird remains anchored to the dictator, eagerly consuming the small crumbs of feed tossed to the ground. The dictator then explains to the audience that this is how one governs: by inflicting systemic deprivation and pain, the ruler reduces the subject to a state of absolute dependency, ensuring that the victim will perceive even the most meager, worthless concessions as acts of profound benevolence.

The brilliance of this allegory lies in its depiction of control not through continuous, active coercion, but through the psychological manipulation of dependency. The plucking represents the systematic extraction of autonomy and security. The crumbs represent the illusion of care, a minimal investment required to keep the victim tethered to the abuser. The resulting dynamic is a form of learned helplessness, where the subject becomes so disoriented by the loss of its own agency that it internalizes the relationship as necessary for survival. While historically utilized to critique domestic totalitarianism, this mechanism provides a strikingly accurate framework for understanding how a smaller, ostensibly dependent client state can subvert a global superpower.

2.2 Adapting the Allegory for Asymmetric State Relations

Applying this fable to the geopolitical relationship between the United States and Israel requires a structural inversion of traditional power dynamics. In a standard realist model, the United States, as the global hegemon with unparalleled military and economic capacity, should occupy the role of the dictator, dictating terms and extracting compliance from its regional client. However, the empirical reality of the alliance demonstrates that the United States occupies the role of the captive bird. The plucking is not physical, but strategic and material. It manifests in the perpetual extraction of American wealth through guaranteed, unconditional military financing that persists regardless of the client state's actions or defiance of American policy. Furthermore, the plucking encompasses the stripping away of American diplomatic credibility, as the United States is repeatedly forced to expend its geopolitical capital to shield Israel from international accountability, leaving the American state isolated and exposed to global condemnation.

In exchange for enduring this continuous extraction of wealth and diplomatic standing, the United States is fed crumbs. These crumbs do not come in the form of reciprocal strategic protection or economic dividends, which one would expect in a functional alliance. Instead, they are rhetorical and political. The primary crumb is the endlessly repeated mantra that Israel is our greatest ally. Other crumbs include minor intelligence-sharing agreements—often of disproportionate benefit to the client state—and superficial political gestures designed to validate the shared democratic values narrative. These concessions cost the client state virtually nothing, yet they are eagerly consumed by an American political establishment desperate to justify the immense sacrifices demanded of its citizenry.

2.3 Cognitive Dissonance and the Captive Patron

The most perplexing aspect of this dynamic is why a superpower would submit to such asymmetric extraction. In the fable, the chicken stays because it has been physically traumatized and lacks the cognitive capacity to understand its exploitation. In the realm of statecraft, the American submission is driven by cognitive dissonance and the sunk-cost fallacy. Having invested trillions of dollars, sacrificed countless diplomatic relationships, and deeply embedded the rhetoric of this alliance into its domestic political identity, the American establishment cannot easily walk away without acknowledging a generational strategic failure.

The more the United States is plucked—the more its strategic interests in the Middle East are compromised by unconditional support for its client—the more desperately it clings to the rhetorical crumbs. Acknowledging the asymmetric, parasitic nature of the relationship would require a fundamental restructuring of American foreign policy and a confrontation with deeply entrenched domestic lobbying apparatuses. Consequently, it is psychologically and politically easier for the state apparatus to consume the crumbs, internalize the narrative of a vital alliance, and willingly present itself for the next round of plucking. This psychological dependency ensures that the cycle of extraction continues unchallenged, locking the superpower into a geopolitical paradigm that fundamentally contradicts its own national interests.

3. The Feathers: Financial and Military Costs Borne by the United States

3.1 The Unprecedented Scale of Wealth Transfer

In the allegorical framework of the plucked chicken, the most literal and quantifiable extraction of feathers from the American state is the direct transfer of financial and military resources. Historically, the United States has provided more cumulative foreign assistance to Israel than to any other country since the end of the Second World War. Adjusted for inflation, this wealth transfer represents hundreds of billions of dollars extracted directly from the American

taxpayer. Unlike the Marshall Plan, which was a finite project designed to rebuild a war-torn continent into self-sustaining economic partners, the financial subsidization of this specific client state is a permanent, institutionalized fixture of the American federal budget. Through successive Memoranda of Understanding, the United States legally binds itself to disperse billions of dollars annually in Foreign Military Financing. This systemic plucking occurs entirely decoupled from the actual economic conditions of the United States. Whether the American economy is experiencing a surplus, a severe recession, or staggering deficit spending, the wealth transfer remains a protected and untouchable mandate, illustrating a core feature of asymmetric dependency wherein the patron prioritizes the peripheral state's requirements over its own fiscal health.

3.2 The Anomaly of Unconditional Subsidization

In traditional international relations theory, foreign aid is a tool of leverage. A superpower distributes financial and military assistance to ensure a client state's compliance with its broader strategic objectives. If the client state actively undermines the patron's regional interests, violates its diplomatic directives, or uses provided military hardware in unsanctioned ways, the aid is routinely delayed, conditioned, or revoked. This conditional mechanism is entirely absent in the US-Israel dynamic. The extraction of American wealth is absolute and unconditional. Successive American administrations have watched their stated foreign policy objectives—such as regional de-escalation, nuclear non-proliferation, or specific diplomatic frameworks—be actively thwarted by the client state, yet the financial pipeline remains entirely undisturbed. This phenomenon perfectly mirrors the dynamics of the fable. The dictator does not need to moderate its behavior to continue plucking the bird; the bird's surrender of its feathers has become a structural reflex rather than a negotiated exchange. The lack of conditionality transforms what should be strategic foreign assistance into an obligatory geopolitical tribute.

3.3 The Qualitative Military Edge and the Perpetual Upgrade Cycle

The mechanism of military subsidization is further complicated by the American legal and policy commitment to maintaining the client state's Qualitative Military Edge. This doctrine mandates that the United States must ensure Israel possesses technological and tactical superiority over any combination of regional actors. By institutionalizing this doctrine, the United States has trapped itself in a remarkably costly feedback loop of its own making. Whenever the American defense apparatus seeks to maintain strategic relationships with other Middle Eastern nations through the sale of advanced weaponry, the Qualitative Military Edge doctrine dictates that the United States must simultaneously provide its client state with even more advanced, and drastically more expensive, military technology to offset the initial sale. Consequently, the American taxpayer is forced to finance both sides of a regional arms race, constantly subsidizing the perpetual upgrade of the client state's military arsenal. This creates a permanent drain on

American resources, stretching the industrial base and depleting stockpiles that could otherwise be allocated to theaters of genuine strategic competition. The feathers are not merely plucked once; they are continuously harvested to sustain an artificial and endlessly escalating equilibrium.

3.4 Socioeconomic Asymmetry and Domestic Deprivation

The irrationality of this asymmetric dependency becomes most glaring when evaluating the socioeconomic realities of the two nations involved. Traditional foreign aid is typically directed toward developing nations lacking the infrastructure or economic output to sustain their own populations or defense forces. Israel, however, is a technologically advanced, highly developed nation with a robust gross domestic product and a high standard of living. It boasts advanced domestic infrastructure, universal healthcare systems, subsidized higher education, and formidable sovereign wealth capabilities. Conversely, the American taxpayer—the entity physically providing the capital for these foreign subsidies—frequently struggles with decaying domestic infrastructure, medical debt, and an increasingly fragile social safety net. The allegorical imagery here is profound: the American public, stripped of its own resources and left shivering without adequate domestic investment, is heavily taxed to subsidize the military and economic stability of a foreign power that already enjoys social benefits the American working class is routinely denied. This stark socioeconomic asymmetry underscores the thesis that the relationship is not based on rational necessity or mutual benefit, but is instead the result of a manufactured, psychological dependency that compels the patron to enrich the client at the direct expense of its own citizens.

4. Diplomatic Plucking: US Isolation in the United Nations and the Global South

4.1 The Veto as a Mechanism of Diplomatic Self-Sabotage

In the geopolitical translation of the plucked chicken allegory, the loss of feathers is not limited to financial capital and military hardware; it extends heavily into the realm of soft power and international diplomacy. The most visible arena for this extraction is the United Nations Security Council. For decades, the United States has deployed its veto power almost exclusively to shield its client state from international censure, condemnation, or accountability regarding widely recognized violations of international law. This diplomatic shielding requires the United States to expend massive amounts of geopolitical capital. Each veto cast in defense of the client state's unilateral actions strips the United States of its credibility, isolating it from its traditional European allies and the broader international consensus. The American state willingly absorbs the global animosity and reputational damage, presenting itself to international condemnation to ensure the client remains untouched. This reflexive, unyielding use of the veto is the essence

of diplomatic plucking, wherein the superpower repeatedly sacrifices its own global standing to serve the peripheral state.

4.2 Alienation of the Global South and Strategic Vacuums

The consequences of this diplomatic extraction extend far beyond the chambers of the United Nations, actively undermining American grand strategy in the developing world. As the United States maneuvers to counter the rising influence of rival superpowers in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, its unconditional support for Israel acts as a severe strategic liability. The nations of the Global South, many of which share historical experiences of colonialism, asymmetric conflict, and national liberation struggles, consistently view the US-Israel dynamic as a glaring manifestation of Western hypocrisy. By anchoring its foreign policy to the defense of a highly militarized client state, the United States alienates these critical voting blocs and emerging economies. This diplomatic alienation creates a geopolitical vacuum that strategic rivals eagerly exploit, offering alternative partnerships devoid of such ideological baggage. The feathers lost in this arena are the bilateral relationships, trade agreements, and coalition-building opportunities that the United States forfeits because it cannot disentangle its global diplomacy from the localized demands of its client.

4.3 The Hypocrisy Trap and the Collapse of the Rules-Based Order

A core pillar of American foreign policy has long been the promotion and enforcement of a rules-based international order, predicated on the universal application of human rights, territorial integrity, and international law. However, the asymmetric dependency on Israel forces the United States into a perpetual hypocrisy trap. The American state routinely condemns territorial acquisition by force, disproportionate military campaigns, and human rights abuses when committed by adversarial nations, yet it aggressively defends, funds, and arms identical behaviors when perpetrated by its client state. This undeniable double standard strips the United States of the moral high ground, which has traditionally been one of its most potent foreign policy tools. The plucking here is the systematic destruction of American soft power. The United States cannot effectively rally global coalitions against sovereign aggressors or rogue states when its own diplomatic apparatus is fundamentally compromised by the task of providing legal and political immunity for its client.

4.4 The Worthless Crumbs of International Defiance

In exchange for enduring this profound diplomatic isolation and the collapse of its moral authority, the United States is once again fed rhetorical crumbs. The client state and aligned domestic lobbying apparatuses praise American political leaders for standing strong against a purportedly biased international community. The American public is told that its isolation at the United Nations is a badge of honor, a testament to its unwavering courage and commitment to

its greatest ally. This framing perfectly mirrors the psychological manipulation of the fable. The dictator convinces the traumatized bird that the cold reality of its nakedness is actually a virtue, framing the loss of its feathers as an act of noble endurance. The United States accepts the loss of its global influence and diplomatic agility, consuming the empty praise of its client state as justification for its own geopolitical marginalization. The patron is left increasingly isolated on the world stage, clutching the illusion of a righteous alliance while its actual diplomatic architecture is steadily dismantled.

5. Strategic Vulnerability and Regional Blowback in the Middle East

5.1 The Subversion of American Regional Interests

To understand the depth of the geopolitical plucking endured by the United States, one must examine the broader theater of the Middle East, where American macro-strategic interests are routinely subverted by the micro-tactical demands of its client state. A rational, hegemonic foreign policy in this region would prioritize the free flow of global energy resources, the prevention of regional hegemonies by adversarial powers, the maintenance of open maritime chokepoints, and the stabilization of allied Arab governments. However, the asymmetric dependency on Israel structurally impairs the United States from pursuing these objectives objectively. The patron is repeatedly forced into a reactive posture, deploying its own military assets, carrier strike groups, and diplomatic capital to manage the fallout of the client state's preemptive strikes, assassinations, and territorial expansions. The feathers extracted in this arena are the American strategic flexibility and regional stability. Instead of acting as an offshore balancer mitigating conflicts, the United States is tethered directly to the region's most polarizing actor, forcing American strategists to subordinate their own comprehensive regional architecture to the survival and expansionist policies of a single peripheral state.

5.2 The Catalyst for Anti-American Blowback and Asymmetric Warfare

The most physical manifestation of this strategic vulnerability is the direct blowback endured by American military personnel, diplomatic missions, and economic assets abroad. By providing unconditional financial and military underwriting to the client state, the United States inherently assumes ownership of the client state's actions in the eyes of the region. This total fusion of American and Israeli policy serves as the primary radicalizing catalyst for asymmetric warfare and transnational terrorism directed at the West. The American taxpayer funds the munitions, and in turn, American forward operating bases, embassies, and commercial vessels become the targets of retaliatory strikes by regional militias and state actors. The United States absorbs the kinetic impact of hostilities that it did not initiate and from which it derives no strategic benefit. In the context of the fable, this is the dictator not only plucking the bird but

using the bird as a physical shield against incoming projectiles. The American public sheds blood and treasure managing a perpetual state of regional hostility that is fundamentally animated by its refusal to sever or condition its asymmetric dependency.

5.3 The Crumb of the Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier

To justify this immense strategic liability and the constant exposure of American assets to regional blowback, the defense and political establishments rely on one of the most enduring rhetorical crumbs of the relationship: the narrative that the client state serves as an unsinkable aircraft carrier or a vital forward operating base for American interests. This concept is eagerly consumed by the American public, yet it disintegrates upon empirical scrutiny. In a genuine patron-client military alliance, the patron utilizes the client's territory and resources to project its own power and fight its own adversaries. However, during major American military engagements in the Middle East, the client state has historically proven to be a strategic liability rather than an asset. When the United States sought to build a coalition of Arab states during the Gulf War, it had to expend massive diplomatic effort and financial bribes to prevent its unsinkable aircraft carrier from participating, knowing that Israeli involvement would instantly fracture the American-led coalition. The United States cannot utilize the client state to project power without triggering regional conflagrations, meaning the purported forward operating base is essentially unusable for American macro-strategic objectives. The crumb is an illusion of militaristic utility that masks the reality of strategic paralysis.

5.4 Diplomatic Captivity and the Sabotage of Regional Detente

Furthermore, the asymmetric dependency severely restricts the ability of the United States to negotiate or achieve detente with other regional powers. The client state frequently views any normalization of relations or diplomatic agreements between the United States and other Middle Eastern nations as a zero-sum threat to its own Qualitative Military Edge and regional supremacy. Consequently, the client state and its aligned domestic lobbying apparatus actively sabotage American diplomatic initiatives, such as nuclear non-proliferation agreements or sanctions relief aimed at de-escalating tensions with regional adversaries. The American statecraft apparatus is effectively held captive, unable to pursue diplomatic off-ramps or balance regional powers because the client dictates the parameters of American engagement. The patron is locked into a state of perpetual hostility with nations that pose no inherent, existential threat to the American homeland, simply because the client state requires the patron to fight its regional proxy wars. The United States endures this diplomatic captivity, sacrificing its own pathways to peace, while continuing to gratefully accept the rhetorical crumbs that assure the traumatized hegemon it is acting in the defense of a shared, vital alliance.

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6. The Crumbs of Alliance: Deconstructing the Rhetorical Assurances

6.1 The Psychological Function of the Rhetorical Crumb

In the allegory of the plucked chicken, the dictator does not sustain the bird's loyalty by returning its feathers or providing a warm shelter; he sustains it by dropping small, nutritionally worthless crumbs of feed. The efficacy of the crumb lies not in its material value, but in its psychological impact on a traumatized and disoriented subject. In the context of the asymmetric dependency between the United States and Israel, the American state surrenders tangible, hard-power assets—billions in taxpayer wealth, advanced military hardware, and irreplaceable diplomatic capital. In exchange, the patron is fed rhetorical crumbs. These are carefully constructed narratives, slogans, and political reassurances designed to soothe the cognitive dissonance of the American electorate and its political class. Because the United States cannot point to reciprocal material or strategic benefits that justify its immense sacrifices, it must be fed a steady diet of ideological validation. These rhetorical assurances function as a political pacifier, masking the extractive nature of the relationship and convincing the superpower that its systemic plucking is actually a noble geopolitical burden.

6.2 The Shared Democratic Values Paradigm

The most prominent and frequently dispensed crumb is the assertion that the United States and Israel are bound by shared democratic values, often accompanied by the refrain that the client state is the only democracy in the Middle East. This narrative operates as a powerful ideological shield. By framing the alliance as a kinship of enlightened, democratic systems facing a hostile, autocratic region, the client state elevates the relationship from a transactional security arrangement to a moral imperative. However, an empirical deconstruction of this crumb reveals profound structural divergences. The American democratic tradition, despite its historical flaws, is fundamentally rooted in civic nationalism and the legal equality of its citizens regardless of ethnic or religious origin. Conversely, the client state's constitutional framework and foundational laws are explicitly rooted in ethno-nationalism, establishing distinct tiers of citizenship, residency, and civil rights based on ethnic and religious identity. The shared values crumb requires the American public to ignore this fundamental incompatibility and look past systemic disenfranchisement, military occupation, and asymmetrical legal structures. The American state eagerly consumes this illusion of ideological brotherhood because acknowledging the reality would shatter the moral justification for the continuous extraction of its resources.

6.3 The Illusion of a Special Relationship

Another vital crumb used to sustain the dynamic is the invocation of a Special Relationship, a term originally coined to describe the deeply reciprocal, culturally integrated, and historically

bound alliance between the United States and the United Kingdom. By hijacking this terminology, the client state and its domestic advocates artificially elevate the US-Israel dynamic to the highest tier of American diplomacy. Yet, traditional special relationships are characterized by formal mutual defense treaties, seamless intelligence integration, and synchronized foreign policy objectives. The US-Israel relationship lacks a formal mutual defense treaty, precisely because such a treaty would legally obligate the client state to defend the United States, thereby limiting its autonomy and drawing it into American conflicts. Furthermore, while the United States is expected to synchronize its Middle Eastern policy with the client's preferences, the client routinely ignores American directives regarding settlement expansion, regional escalation, and technology transfers to American geopolitical rivals. The Special Relationship crumb is a one-way mirror; it projects the illusion of a profound, unbreakable bond to the American public while the client state operates with ruthless, unilateral pragmatism.

6.4 The Weaponization of Cultural and Theological Affinity

To bypass rational, interest-based foreign policy analysis entirely, the rhetoric sustaining this asymmetric dependency frequently relies on the weaponization of cultural and theological affinity. The introduction of terms like Judeo-Christian values into the American political lexicon serves to create an artificial civilizational binary, linking the survival of the American republic directly to the territorial expansion and military dominance of the client state. This theological crumb is particularly effective in domesticating specific, highly influential voting blocs within the United States. By framing unconditional financial and military support as a religious obligation or a civilizational imperative, the client state immunizes itself from traditional political scrutiny. When foreign policy is elevated to the realm of the divine, any attempt to condition aid, question strategic logic, or halt the plucking is immediately branded as moral heresy. The American public, effectively paralyzed by these cultural and theological manipulations, willingly submits to the continuous extraction of its national wealth, grateful for the crumb of spiritual and civilizational validation tossed by the very entity that is steadily depleting its geopolitical strength.

7. Asymmetric Intelligence and Military Cooperation: A Critical Reevaluation

7.1 The Myth of the Intelligence Dividend

When the rhetorical appeals to shared democratic values and theological affinity fail to persuade foreign policy realists, defenders of the asymmetric dependency inevitably deploy what is considered the ultimate strategic crumb: the intelligence dividend. The prevailing narrative posits that the client state serves as an indispensable listening post in the Middle East, providing the United States with critical, actionable intelligence that safeguards American lives

and interests. However, a critical reevaluation of this intelligence-sharing apparatus reveals a deeply asymmetrical exchange that disproportionately benefits the client while exposing the patron to significant risks. The United States, possessing a global signals intelligence architecture that dwarfs that of any other nation, routinely provides the client state with massive, unfiltered streams of raw data. In return, the intelligence fed back to the American apparatus is frequently highly filtered, compartmentalized, and specifically tailored to manipulate American threat perceptions. Rather than serving as an objective lens through which the United States can assess regional dynamics, the provided intelligence often acts as a mechanism to drag the patron into the client state's localized conflicts. The superpower trades the full weight of its global surveillance capabilities for the crumb of selective information, allowing the peripheral state to shape the hegemon’s strategic reality.

7.2 Espionage and the Extraction of State Secrets

The plucking of the American state within the military and intelligence sphere extends far beyond unequal data-sharing agreements; it encompasses active, aggressive espionage conducted by the client against the patron. In a standard alliance, a baseline of mutual trust dictates that partners do not run comprehensive intelligence operations against one another's domestic infrastructure or classified military programs. The US-Israel dynamic, however, is characterized by a long, documented history of the client state penetrating the highest levels of the American defense and intelligence establishments. From the recruitment of highly placed naval intelligence analysts who compromised American nuclear deterrent strategies, to the modern deployment of advanced commercial spyware utilized to monitor American diplomats and officials abroad, the extraction of American state secrets is systematic and relentless. In the context of the fable, this is the dictator not merely plucking the outward feathers of the bird, but actively extracting its vital internal organs. The American political establishment, paralyzed by the psychological dependency outlined previously, routinely minimizes these massive breaches of national security, treating severe espionage as a minor indiscretion between friends rather than a hostile extraction of power.

7.3 Technology Transfers and Geopolitical Leakage

The asymmetry of military cooperation is further exemplified by the flow of defense technology and intellectual property. The American taxpayer heavily subsidizes the research and development of the client state's defense sector, funneling billions into joint missile defense programs and advanced aerospace technology. The rhetorical crumb offered to the American public is that this investment yields technological breakthroughs that eventually benefit the American military. The empirical reality, however, is that this massive influx of capital has transformed the client state into a major global arms exporter that directly competes with the American defense industrial base. More alarmingly, this dynamic frequently results in severe

geopolitical leakage. There is a well-documented historical pattern of the client state taking advanced military technology developed with or provided by the United States and transferring it to primary American strategic rivals, including rising superpowers in East Asia. The United States subsidizes the research, takes on the financial risk, and ultimately watches its proprietary technology sold to its greatest geopolitical competitors. The dictator plucks the bird and subsequently sells the feathers to the bird's most dangerous adversaries, all while the American state continues to finance the operation.

7.4 The Testing Ground Fallacy

To obscure the deeply extractive nature of this technological and financial transfer, the domestic lobbying apparatus frequently points to the testing ground fallacy. This argument posits that because the client state is in a state of perpetual conflict, it serves as a valuable laboratory for testing American military hardware in real-world combat scenarios. This crumb suggests that the United States derives invaluable tactical data from the client state's military campaigns. However, this assertion fundamentally ignores the unmatched scale and capability of the American military's own testing, evaluation, and operational infrastructure. The United States does not require a foreign power to test its munitions on asymmetric, captive, or stateless populations to understand the efficacy of its weapons systems. Furthermore, the strategic and moral liability of having American-branded weaponry continuously utilized in highly controversial, disproportionate regional conflicts vastly outweighs any minor tactical data retrieved. The testing ground argument is an intellectual sleight of hand, designed to convince the American taxpayer that they are purchasing a vital service, rather than simply supplying the endless ammunition required to maintain the client state's regional hegemony. The bird is told that the shedding of its feathers is a necessary scientific experiment, masking the reality of unilateral depletion.

8. The Role of Domestic Lobbying in Maintaining the Allegorical Dynamic

8.1 The Architecture of Political Capture

To comprehend how a global superpower remains locked in a state of asymmetric dependency, one must examine the domestic mechanisms that enforce the client state's will upon the patron's political apparatus. In the fable of the plucked chicken, the dictator’s control is maintained through a combination of severe trauma and the monopolization of sustenance. In the American political system, this dynamic is replicated and enforced by a highly organized, heavily capitalized domestic lobbying infrastructure. This apparatus acts as the proxy hand of the dictator, managing the behavior of the American political class. It ensures that the structural plucking of American wealth and diplomatic capital continues unabated by systematically

capturing the legislative branch of the American government. Unlike traditional foreign lobbying efforts, which operate on the margins of policy to secure specific trade deals or tariffs, the lobbying apparatus dedicated to the US-Israel relationship is uniquely integrated into the core of the American electoral system. It functions not merely as an advocacy group, but as a gatekeeper to political viability, dictating the boundaries of acceptable foreign policy discourse and actively policing the ideological boundaries of both major American political parties.

8.2 Campaign Finance as the Mechanism of Compliance

The primary tool utilized by this domestic lobbying apparatus to enforce dependency is the strategic deployment of campaign finance. In this ecosystem, political survival and campaign funding serve as the ultimate crumbs for the American politician. Members of Congress quickly learn that absolute compliance with the demands of the client state—voting for unconditional military aid, supporting diplomatic shielding at the United Nations, and repeating the required rhetorical mantras—guarantees access to a vast network of bundled campaign contributions and favorable political action committee spending. Conversely, any attempt to question the asymmetric nature of the alliance, to condition military aid on human rights compliance, or to assert American strategic autonomy is met with immediate political plucking. The lobbying apparatus routinely directs millions of dollars into the primary campaigns of challengers seeking to unseat incumbent politicians who display any degree of geopolitical independence. By weaponizing campaign finance, the lobby creates a profound chilling effect. The American political class is conditioned to understand that the client state's interests must be prioritized above the patron's own strategic or financial health, lest they be stripped of their political careers. They accept the plucking of their nation's resources to secure the crumbs of their own political survival.

8.3 Legislative Subversion and the Erosion of Constitutional Norms

The power of this domestic lobbying apparatus extends beyond campaign finance, frequently resulting in the subversion of domestic American law to serve the interests of the foreign client. This is most evidently demonstrated by the proliferation of state and federal legislation designed to penalize American citizens and corporations that participate in boycotts or divestment campaigns targeting the client state. By pushing these legislative mandates, the lobby forces the American political system to erode its own constitutional norms, specifically the First Amendment right to political expression and protest. The patron state is coerced into utilizing its own legal architecture to shield the client state from economic pressure, effectively prioritizing the economic security of a foreign power over the civil liberties of its own citizens. This represents a profound deepening of the allegorical dependency. The bird is not only plucked of its feathers; it is forced to actively participate in the plucking of its own offspring to appease the dictator. The willingness of American lawmakers to pass such unconstitutional

measures highlights the extent of the cognitive capture, demonstrating a political class that has entirely internalized the demands of the client state as its own.

8.4 The Enforcement of the Rhetorical Crumb

Beyond financial coercion and legislative manipulation, the domestic lobbying apparatus serves as the chief enforcer of the rhetorical crumbs that sustain the illusion of the alliance. The lobby meticulously drafts the talking points, resolutions, and public statements that American politicians are required to adopt during times of regional crisis. When the client state engages in highly controversial military actions that damage American regional interests, the lobbying apparatus activates its network to ensure that the American legislative and executive branches issue synchronized statements of unwavering support. The repetition of phrases such as the right to defend itself and our greatest ally in the region are not spontaneous expressions of American diplomatic consensus; they are mandated scripts enforced by the lobby. This enforcement ensures that the American public is constantly fed the rhetorical crumbs necessary to maintain the psychological dependency. If a politician deviates from the script or attempts to introduce nuance regarding the plucking of American interests, the lobby immediately mobilizes to brand the deviation as a fundamental betrayal, often employing accusations of bigotry to destroy the dissenter's credibility. Through this relentless policing of language, the lobbying apparatus guarantees that the narrative of a sacred, mutual alliance remains impenetrable, even as the empirical reality of asymmetric extraction becomes increasingly undeniable.

9. Media Framing and the Shaping of the American Consensus

9.1 The Manufacturing of Ideological Consent

The extraction of wealth, the sabotage of strategic autonomy, and the normalization of diplomatic isolation cannot be sustained purely through political coercion and campaign finance. For the asymmetric dependency to function seamlessly within a nominally democratic society, the American public must be conditioned to view the plucking of its own state as a natural, necessary, and morally righteous endeavor. This cognitive conditioning is achieved through the systematic manufacturing of consent by the mainstream media apparatus. In the allegory of the plucked chicken, the dictator does not merely drop crumbs in silence; he provides a continuous, soothing narrative to the traumatized bird, explaining that the loss of its feathers is an act of noble sacrifice against an unseen predator. Similarly, the American media landscape operates as the rhetorical amplifier for the domestic lobbying infrastructure, establishing a rigid epistemological framework that dictates how the United States public is permitted to perceive its relationship with the client state. Through highly coordinated media

framing, the extractive realities of the geopolitical alliance are rendered invisible, and the rhetorical crumbs are elevated to the status of unquestionable geopolitical facts.

9.2 Passive Voice and the Asymmetry of Victimhood

One of the most potent mechanisms of media framing utilized to maintain this dependency is the structural manipulation of language, specifically the deployment of the passive voice and the unequal attribution of agency. When the patron state's resources are utilized by the client state to execute highly controversial, disproportionate military campaigns that destabilize the Middle East, the American media systematically sanitizes the coverage. Actions taken by the client state are routinely described in the passive voice—buildings are destroyed, civilian casualties occur, and conflicts escalate—effectively removing the perpetrator from the narrative equation. Conversely, actions taken against the client state are reported in the active voice, with hyper-focus on the malicious intent and agency of the adversary. This linguistic asymmetry serves a critical psychological function. It conditions the American electorate to view the client state as a perpetual, passive victim of its geography, rather than an active, highly militarized regional hegemon. By monopolizing the narrative of victimhood, the media ensures that the American public feels a continuous moral obligation to provide financial and military subsidies, viewing the surrender of its national wealth as an act of humanitarian protection rather than an unreciprocated geopolitical tribute.

9.3 The Filter of Acceptable Discourse and the Marginalization of Dissent

To guarantee the unchallenged consumption of rhetorical crumbs, the media apparatus establishes a strict filter of acceptable discourse that effectively marginalizes any empirical critique of the alliance. Mainstream broadcast networks, editorial boards, and leading publications operate within a narrow Overton window where the foundational necessity of the US-Israel relationship is treated as an immutable law of nature rather than a debatable policy choice. Analysts, academics, or politicians who attempt to highlight the severe strategic costs borne by the United States—the diplomatic isolation, the regional blowback, or the economic drain—are routinely excluded from primary media platforms. When such dissenting voices do manage to penetrate the mainstream discourse, they are rarely engaged on the empirical merits of their arguments. Instead, the media framing shifts to attack the character and motivations of the dissenter, often relying on the same accusations of bigotry weaponized by the domestic lobbying apparatus. This systematic exclusion creates an illusion of universal consensus. The American public is led to believe that unconditional support for the client state is the only rational position, simply because the media architecture prevents them from hearing any articulation of American strategic autonomy.

9.4 Framing the Crumb as the Feast

Ultimately, the role of the media in this asymmetric dependency is to continuously frame the rhetorical crumb as a geopolitical feast. When the client state provides minor, highly filtered intelligence drops, the media magnifies these transactions into world-saving interventions that supposedly validate the entire defense subsidy. When political leaders invoke shared democratic values or recite the mandated scripts of an unbreakable bond, the media amplifies these hollow platitudes as profound statesmanship. The press acts as the enthusiastic audience to the dictator's performance, applauding as the feathers are stripped and celebrating the generosity of the crumbs. By prioritizing narrative cohesion over empirical investigation, the media apparatus actively suppresses the cognitive dissonance that would naturally arise if the American public were confronted with the stark reality of its own exploitation. The captive patron is kept docile, isolated from the truth of its strategic vulnerability, and convinced by the daily headlines that its subjugation is actually a triumph of global leadership.

10. Psychological Dependency in Superpower Foreign Policy

10.1 The Sunk-Cost Fallacy of Geopolitical Investment

To fully understand why the American state apparatus continues to endure the systemic extraction of its resources and the active sabotage of its global standing, one must examine the psychological mechanisms that govern superpower foreign policy. In standard rational choice theory, a state will abandon or renegotiate an alliance when the geopolitical costs consistently and overwhelmingly outweigh the strategic benefits. However, the US-Israel dynamic is governed by a profound, institutionalized sunk-cost fallacy. Over the span of several decades, the United States has invested vast sums of direct economic aid, unmatched military subsidies, and irreplaceable diplomatic capital to guarantee the client state's qualitative military edge and regional supremacy. Acknowledging that this massive, generational expenditure has fundamentally destabilized the Middle East, fueled asymmetric blowback against American assets, and isolated the United States internationally would require a catastrophic admission of failure by the American foreign policy establishment. The political and intelligence architectures are psychologically incapable of processing this reality. Consequently, they double down on the alliance, internalizing the plucking of American resources not as a failure of grand strategy, but as a necessary burden of global leadership. The dictator in the fable relies precisely on this mechanism; the longer the bird endures the plucking, the more it must convince itself that the suffering has an inherent, noble meaning.

10.2 Identity Fusion and National Myth-Making

Beyond financial and strategic sunk costs, the psychological dependency is deeply rooted in a phenomenon of identity fusion. The domestic lobbying apparatus and its aligned media architecture have successfully merged the national mythologies of both states within the American consciousness. The American political class has been systematically conditioned to view the client state as a direct extension of the American frontier myth, casting the peripheral nation as a pioneering, enlightened democracy carving civilization out of a hostile, autocratic wilderness. By fusing these historical narratives, any empirical critique of the client state's aggressive territorial expansion, violations of international law, or asymmetric military campaigns is psychologically registered by the American establishment as an attack on American values themselves. This cognitive fusion effectively short-circuits rational foreign policy analysis. When a superpower perceives a client state not as a separate sovereign entity with distinct and often competing interests, but as a reflection of its own ideological soul, the capacity for objective statecraft collapses entirely. The rhetorical crumbs of shared democratic values serve to reinforce this fusion daily, ensuring that the superpower interprets the defense of the client as a defense of its own existential identity.

10.3 The Internalization of the Client's Threat Perception

A core symptom of this asymmetric dependency is the phenomenon wherein the patron state entirely adopts the threat perceptions of the client state, losing the objective distance required for hegemonic stability. As a continentally secure superpower bordered by oceans and allied neighbors, the United States faces virtually no existential military threats from the Middle East. The client state, however, operates under a doctrine of permanent paranoia, viewing every regional development, shifting alliance, or accumulation of adversarial capabilities as a direct, existential prelude to its annihilation. Through constant intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and relentless political lobbying, the client state has successfully uploaded its localized, hyper-vigilant threat matrix directly into the American foreign policy establishment. American presidents and diplomats now routinely speak of Middle Eastern regional dynamics with the exact same apocalyptic urgency as the client state's leaders. This psychological hijacking forces the United States to deploy aircraft carrier strike groups, absorb kinetic attacks on its forward operating bases, and expend immense diplomatic capital to preemptively neutralize localized threats that pose no actual danger to the American homeland. The superpower has effectively become a psychological hostage to the client's localized fears, mobilizing the full weight of its global military apparatus to manage the border disputes of a peripheral state.

10.4 The Fear of the Strategic Void

Finally, the psychological dependency is sustained by the American establishment's paralyzing fear of a strategic void. The US-Israel alliance has served as the unquestioned organizing principle and gravitational center of American Middle Eastern policy for over half a century. The entire architecture of American diplomacy, military procurement, and regional alliances has been built around the fundamental mandate of protecting the client state. To sever or severely condition this relationship would require dismantling and rebuilding the entire American strategic posture in the region from scratch. The sheer intellectual, political, and bureaucratic effort required to execute such a paradigm shift terrifies the American foreign policy consensus. It is psychologically far easier for the establishment to maintain a failing, highly extractive status quo than to step into the unknown void of an independent, interest-based regional strategy. The captive bird remains anchored to the dictator not simply because it desires the rhetorical crumbs, but because the cage of the alliance is the only reality it understands. The prospect of navigating the global geopolitical landscape without the familiar weight of its abuser is perceived by the traumatized patron as a greater threat than the perpetual plucking itself.

11. Pathways to Strategic Autonomy: Reclaiming American Geopolitical Independence

11.1 The Necessity of a Paradigm Shift

The systemic plucking of American diplomatic, financial, and strategic resources cannot be permanently sustained without inflicting irreversible damage to the superpower's global hegemonic standing. Reclaiming American geopolitical independence requires a fundamental paradigm shift away from the model of asymmetric dependency and toward a normalized, interest-based foreign policy. This transition must begin with the intellectual uncoupling of American national security objectives from the localized, expansionist ambitions of its peripheral client state. The foreign policy establishment must recognize that the unconditional provision of military aid and diplomatic cover no longer serves as a stabilizing force in the Middle East, but rather acts as the primary driver of regional hostility and American vulnerability. Strategic autonomy dictates that the United States must retain the capacity to dictate the terms of its alliances, condition its assistance upon strict compliance with its own grand strategy, and, when necessary, abandon partnerships that generate disproportionate liabilities. Transitioning away from the current model is not an act of abandonment, as domestic lobbying apparatuses frequently claim, but an essential restoration of American sovereign statecraft and rational deterrence.

11.2 Phasing Out Unconditional Foreign Military Financing

The most direct and necessary mechanism for breaking this dependency is the systematic dismantling of the unconditional Foreign Military Financing pipeline. The current architecture of multi-year Memoranda of Understanding legally binds the American taxpayer to subsidize a highly developed, technologically advanced foreign military regardless of that state's adherence to American diplomatic directives. To restore leverage, the United States must transition this relationship from a model of permanent, mandatory subsidy to one of conditional, transactional procurement. This requires allowing the existing, historically entrenched aid agreements to expire without automatic renewal, fundamentally altering the structural expectations of the client state. By transitioning to a framework where military cooperation and technology transfers are negotiated on a case-by-case basis, the United States can ensure that its material support is utilized strictly for defensive postures that align with broader American regional objectives. This financial phase-out removes the economic feathers from the dictator's grasp, forcing the client state to internalize the actual costs of its localized conflicts and territorial ambitions rather than continuously offloading those financial and strategic burdens onto the American public.

11.3 Offshore Balancing and the Rejection of Proxy Hostilities

Reclaiming strategic autonomy in the Middle East requires the United States to adopt a posture of offshore balancing, fundamentally rejecting the mandate to serve as the unconditional military guarantor for a single, highly polarizing regional actor. Under an offshore balancing strategy, the United States would maintain over-the-horizon capabilities to prevent the emergence of a hostile regional hegemon and secure vital maritime chokepoints, but it would cease the forward deployment of its own assets to manage the client state's border disputes and proxy wars. This strategic recalibration would require the client state to operate within the limits of its own conventional capabilities and negotiate diplomatic detentes with its neighbors, rather than relying on the guaranteed intervention of American aircraft carrier strike groups. By refusing to absorb the kinetic blowback of the client state's unilateral actions, the United States instantly reduces its exposure to transnational terrorism and asymmetric warfare. This approach restores the patron's capacity to act as an objective, independent broker in the region, rather than remaining trapped as a captive belligerent fighting on behalf of its dependent.

11.4 Dismantling the Rhetorical Architecture

Ultimately, the restoration of American geopolitical independence cannot be achieved solely through financial restructuring and military retrenchment; it requires a concerted effort to dismantle the rhetorical architecture that sustains the psychological dependency. The American political class must be emancipated from the enforcement mechanisms of the domestic

lobbying apparatus, and the media must cease the unquestioned amplification of the alliance's foundational myths. The rhetorical crumbs—the uncritical invocation of shared democratic values, the illusion of the unsinkable aircraft carrier, and the weaponization of theological affinity—must be aggressively deconstructed and replaced with empirical, interest-based analysis. Politicians and policymakers must cultivate the political courage to reject the mandated scripts and publicly articulate the severe asymmetric costs of the relationship without fear of organized political retaliation. Only when the American public and its representatives recognize that the endless surrender of their national wealth and global standing is a choice, rather than a geopolitical inevitability, can the cycle of dependency be broken. True strategic autonomy demands that a superpower refuses to trade its own security and prosperity for the worthless crumbs of manufactured ideological validation.

12. Conclusion: The Limits of Rhetorical Alliance

12.1 The Unsustainability of the Extractive Paradigm

The apocryphal fable of the plucked chicken remains a potent and enduring allegory because it successfully distills the complex, often obscured mechanics of systemic dependency into a stark visual narrative. When applied as a theoretical framework to analyze the modern geopolitical relationship between the United States and Israel, the fable ceases to be a mere rhetorical device and instead functions as an accurate roadmap of American foreign policy failure. The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the traditional paradigm of a mutually beneficial, strategic alliance is a manufactured illusion, sustained by a domestic lobbying apparatus and a compliant media architecture. In reality, the United States has willingly subjected itself to a model of asymmetric extraction. It has surrendered its wealth through unconditional military financing, sacrificed its global soft power through forced diplomatic isolation, and continuously exposed its military assets to regional blowback to serve the expansionist and localized interests of a peripheral client state. A global superpower cannot permanently sustain this level of self-inflicted strategic damage without ultimately fracturing its own hegemonic foundation.

12.2 The Collapse of the Ideological Illusion

For decades, the American political establishment has been able to obscure the staggering costs of this plucking by continuously feeding the electorate the rhetorical crumbs of shared democratic values, theological affinity, and the illusion of an intelligence dividend. However, as the geopolitical landscape evolves and the client state increasingly pursues unilateral military actions that directly contradict American regional objectives, the efficacy of these ideological pacifiers is rapidly collapsing. The cognitive dissonance required to maintain the alliance is becoming mathematically and politically untenable. The American public is beginning to

recognize the profound socioeconomic asymmetry of subsidizing a wealthy, highly militarized foreign nation while domestic infrastructure decays. More critically, emerging generations of voters and policymakers are no longer willing to accept the passive framing of American victimhood or the mandated scripts of unquestioning loyalty. The cage of rhetorical alliance is rusting, and the illusion that the United States is a partner, rather than a captive patron, is dissolving under the weight of empirical reality.

12.3 A Return to Rational Statecraft

Breaking the cycle of asymmetric dependency is not merely a matter of financial prudence; it is an existential requirement for the preservation of American strategic autonomy. The United States must reclaim the capacity to conduct rational, interest-based statecraft, unburdened by the localized paranoia and territorial ambitions of its client state. This requires the political courage to dismantle the unconditional pipeline of foreign military financing, transition to a posture of offshore balancing, and aggressively deconstruct the domestic lobbying architecture that has paralyzed American diplomacy. Restoring sovereignty means recognizing that true national security cannot be outsourced, and that an alliance must be judged by the tangible geopolitical dividends it yields, rather than the emotional or theological validation it provides. The United States must reassert its role as an independent global arbiter, rather than operating as the unconditional guarantor and perpetual shield for a single polarizing actor in a volatile region.

12.4 The Fable's Final Warning

In the conclusion of the fable, the dictator stands triumphant, having successfully proven that an abused, dependent subject will ultimately mistake its abuser for its savior. The warning embedded within this dark allegory is that dependency, once institutionalized, requires immense political will to sever, because the subject has been conditioned to fear freedom more than the extraction itself. For the United States, the path forward requires confronting the uncomfortable truth that it has spent decades actively participating in its own geopolitical subjugation. To walk away from the dictator's hand—to refuse the worthless crumbs and demand a return to sovereign independence—is the only mechanism by which the American state can halt the endless plucking of its resources and reclaim its standing on the global stage. The limits of rhetorical alliance have been reached; the era of unconditional dependency must now end.

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